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**Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays**  
**June 22, 2004**

This is our third hearing on Department of Energy (DOE) efforts to secure the nation's far-flung nuclear weapons complex against the threat of terrorism. Previous testimony described substantial institutional, technical and fiscal challenges faced by efforts to develop and implement the strengthened security standard called the "Design Basis Threat" (or "DBT").

The General Accounting Office (GAO) reported it took too long to formulate the new DBT, that it fails to capture some elements of the threat, and that the lack of a Department-wide strategy means implementation will take longer and cost more than planned. Nevertheless, witnesses pointed to tangible progress toward consolidation of nuclear material and strategies to deny even determined terrorists any access to weapons components.

But we did not hear testimony on the status of physical security enhancements at the five sites outside the active weapons complex managed by the Department's Office of Energy, Science and Environment (ESE). As the DOE National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) succeeds in hardening current weapons production facilities and labs, ESE sites could pose increased risk as the next tier of soft targets for terrorists following the path of least resistance.

While recent consolidation of DOE-wide security policy and oversight functions offers the prospect of consistent DBT implementation, GAO today

reports ESE sites face some unique challenges keeping pace with their NNSA counterparts. Reassessment of the risk that highly enriched uranium or plutonium at ESE sites might be fabricated into an improvised nuclear device could render current security plans inadequate. Any revision to the DBT could trigger a time-consuming reassessment of all security plans. Already, the pace and cost of security strategies seem so uncertain that one site requested no funding at all for DBT implementation this fiscal year.

The good news is the stringent requirements of the new DBT appear to have transformed possession of special nuclear materials from a prestigious credential to a serious liability. Facilities now have a powerful incentive to blend down or consolidate dangerous stocks. But complex management structures, jurisdictional stovepipes and the resultant lack of clear lines of authority for key DBT-related activities create unique barriers to strengthened security at ESE sites. And answering the vexing question “How much security can we afford?” becomes even more difficult when evaluating the cost/benefit yield of capital improvements and security enhancements at decommissioned facilities DOE hopes to close sooner than later.

We are grateful for the time and expertise made available to the Subcommittee today by representatives from the Department of Energy, the General Accounting Office and the Project on Government Oversight. We particularly appreciate the patience and forbearance of our DOE witnesses who agreed to forgo their customary place on the first panel. Their forbearance and willingness to listen will allow them, and us, to engage in more meaningful and constructive dialogue.

Welcome.